

# ACLU of Wisconsin: Commends budget plan to legalize marijuana, reinvest money into communities

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MADISON- The ACLU of Wisconsin today applauded Governor Evers' proposed budget plan to legalize marijuana and reinvest \$80 million into the communities that have been targeted and harmed by the war on drugs, calling the plan an important step forward.

The budget proposal would also reduce or repeal sentences of people with marijuana possession convictions that would under the new legislation would be legal.

The move would also improve racial equity, as Black people are more likely to suffer the consequences for marijuana possession. An ACLU report released in 2020 found that Black people are 4.2 times more likely than white people to be arrested for simple marijuana possession statewide.

"Marijuana enforcement has become a vehicle for law enforcement to target communities of color," said Molly Collins, advocacy director of the ACLU of Wisconsin. "It's past time to end the racially biased and wasteful war on marijuana in Wisconsin."

The report also revealed that four Wisconsin counties were among the worst disparities between Black and white arrest rates in the country, including Ozaukee County, with a 34.90 Black/white arrest ratio; Manitowoc County, with a 29.85 ratio;

Washington County, with 27.07; and Waukesha County, with a 23.88 ratio, [according to the report](#). The national average Black/white arrest ratio is 3.65.

“Handing someone a criminal record for simple possession creates a lifetime of collateral damage,” said Sean Wilson, Smart Justice campaign manager of the ACLU of Wisconsin. “The punishment should fit the crime, and public opinion increasingly favors a new approach to marijuana and more sensible drug policy. The War on Marijuana has needlessly ensnared hundreds of thousands of people in the criminal justice system, at tremendous human and financial cost. The Governor’s effort to help people move forward after a criminal record for drug conviction is the right thing to do.”